

Remarks to the American Legion Boys and Girls Nation

July 18, 1996

Thank you very, very much. I want to welcome all of you here. And before I begin the program let me say I'm sorry I'm a little late today, but we have been working, as I'm sure you understand, all day long on the plane crash last night. I want to talk to you about your future, but before I do I'd like to say just a word about the people that were on that plane.

I'm determined that we will find out what happened, but I want to urge all the American people not to jump to any unwarranted conclusions about the tragedy. We should focus today, our thoughts and our prayers, on the families of the victims of that terrible, terrible tragedy last night. And you should know that everybody in our country that we believe can make a contribution to finding out what happened is on the job, working overtime.

I want you to know if you haven't heard that there were 16 high school students from Pennsylvania on that flight. Any tragedy like this is made deeper if young people's lives are lost, people who haven't yet had their chance to live up to their God-given promise. These young people were from the Montoursville High School french club in Pennsylvania. They were young, committed, filled with excitement about the prospect of visiting France. Our country will be poorer for their absence. And the rest of you will have to work a little harder to live up to your promise and to theirs as well.

The mayor of that small community was just on television, and I had a visit with him a few moments ago. And he said, you know, this is a big hurt that's going to last a while. I'm sure that's true. So I'd like to ask you before we begin the formal program today to join me in a moment of silent prayer for those students, for the other victims, and for their families. Amen.

I would like to welcome our leaders here from the American Legion, Joe Caouette, Lawrence Sperry, Judge Pete Johnson, a member of my Boys Nation class back in the Dark Ages. [Laughter] I welcome Peggy Sappenfield; Katherine Morris, the director

of Girls Nation; Ron Engel, the director of Boys Nation; Jack Mercier, the director of activities who was also there and was a counselor to my class; George Blume, the legislative director.

I'm sure all of you know this is always a special day for me. It's the 50th anniversary of Boys Nation, almost my 50th anniversary on Earth here in a few weeks. [Laughter] This is only the second time ever, the first being the Bicentennial, when Boys Nation and Girls Nation have come to the White House together.

I remember a lot of things about my visit here in 1963, not only my much-heralded shake of hands with President Kennedy and the meetings we had with other leaders, but I remember very vividly the young men I was with from other States, the conversations that we had about the kind of world we would inherit and about what we had to do about it. Our obligations were focused, I think, especially on the issues that dominated our Nation more than 30 years ago now. We talked a lot about the struggle for civil rights and equal opportunities for all Americans. We talked a lot about the struggle against communism and the cold war.

To be sure, we weren't the first generation of Americans to have those conversations. They have been constant in our history. And we know that many of those who founded our Nation more than 200 years ago were themselves very young.

I'd like to ask you think, because we are now on the verge of a new century, about what it was like the last time we stood on the edge of a new century. There's a magnificent portrait right over there in the corner of Theodore Roosevelt by the great American artist John Singer Sargent. Teddy Roosevelt became Vice President in the election of 1900 and was soon elevated to the Presidency when President McKinley was assassinated. He was our President for 7 years, in the beginning of what became known as the Progressive Era. He was the youngest person ever to become President of the United States. And as we stood at the dawn of a new century, he was infectious with his optimism and absolutely contagious in his determination to take on the problems of

America and to make the new era we were then entering work for all Americans.

That was a time, like this, of enormous change. We were around the turn of the century moving from being primarily an agricultural country to being primarily an industrial country. We were moving from being primarily a people who lived on farms, in small, isolated rural areas, or in small communities to being a people who lived primarily in towns and in cities. And it changed dramatically the way we work, the way we live, the way we related to each other. There were enormously good things happening, but a lot of things that weren't so good, that required a vigorous response by our Nation. And so Teddy Roosevelt led our Nation in that response and started, as I said, what became known as the Progressive Era. He and Woodrow Wilson—one a Republican, one a Democrat, both former Governors—were instrumental in kind of breaking out of the pattern of past thinking that had dominated our political life and taking America in a new direction.

It falls to your generation to do something like that now, because we are changing in ways that are, to some extent, more profound than we changed a hundred years ago. Instead of moving from the agricultural to the industrial age, we're now moving into an information age where every form of human endeavor will be dominated by the profound computer chip.

Bill Gates said in his book "The Road From Here" that the digital chip was the most profound revolution in the way human beings communicate with each other since Gutenberg printed the first Bible in Europe 500 years ago. It won't be very long, especially if we succeed in hooking up every classroom and library to the information superhighway, before people in remote mountain communities or the poorest urban neighborhoods of America can go to school, hook into a computer, and do research on volcanoes in Australian libraries, for example. This is going to have enormous implications for the whole nature of work, how we learn, how we relate to each other. And it is a fascinating thing.

We're also moving—as people then moved from rural areas into the cities, we now are

primarily an urban and suburban people. But people will be able to live in rural areas more easily than they used to because of the computer, and to do different things. And no matter whether we live in rural or urban areas, we will have to identify ourselves more and more as citizens of the world as well as Americans.

We're not dominated by a cold war world anymore where every country is either in the camp of democracy or the camp of communism, where we worry about the immminence of a nuclear war that could take the lives of the whole country away. But we do have a whole set of new problems in the world that directly relate to the fact that the cold war is over and things are more open now, and it's easier for people and ideas and money and technology to move around and cross national boundaries.

And when people become more open to new ideas and new information it means that there are also more opportunities for the organized forces of destruction to take advantage of that openness. That's why terrorists can put poison gas on a subway in Tokyo or blow the World Trade Center up or the Federal building in Oklahoma City or set bombs in London or the Holy Land or do all the other things that you've read about in the last few years. The more open we are to moving around and working with each other, the more we'll have to be vigilant in dealing with these problems. It's why we're all more vulnerable to organized crime and drug running that crosses national lines. It's why we have to be more vigilant in dealing with the problems of the proliferation of small-scale nuclear weapons or biological or chemical weapons.

All of these things are the new security threats. And interestingly enough, there's also a very old problem that's rearing its head all over the world as the big threat of communism recedes. And that is the tendency of people everywhere to look down on each other, ultimately hate each other, and maybe even kill each other because of their racial, ethnic, or religious differences. That is at the heart of what is going on in the Middle East. That is at the heart of what is going on in Northern Ireland. That is the heart of what is going on in Bosnia.

We have the most vigorous, vibrant, multi-ethnic democracy in human history, but that is at the heart of what is going on in these church burnings and that is at the heart of what led some mean-spirited people to paint swastikas on the doors of African-American Special Forces personnel at Fort Bragg in the last couple of days. The most patriotic members of a minority you could imagine still being subject to that.

Why is that? Because all throughout human history you see people being told that they should evaluate themselves not based on who they are, what they stand for, and what their values are, what's in the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, but on who they're not, what color they're not, what religion they aren't.

So you have to fight all that. Your generation will have more opportunities than any generation in human history. You will have more chances to live out your dreams in more different ways than any group of people who have ever lived. We have a chance to extend opportunities to people who would have automatically been left in the backwater of history without a second thought, just a few decades ago, because of their gender or their race or because of their disabilities. Things that now we wouldn't think of doing used to be the ordinary run-of-the-mill thing just a few decades ago.

So, on balance, as I look to the 21st century, I think this is going to be a great time for you. It is going to be a great time for America if we meet our challenges and protect our basic values. No country in history has ever lasted so long as a free country, a free people, with so many different kinds of people in it. And the world is coming our way. But there are still these dark forces of destruction that we have to stand against. And you have to speak against it when you see it in a big horrible way, in a manifestation of terrorism. But you also have to stand and speak against it when you see it in subtle ways, in your neighborhoods, on your street, in your schools. We've got to be able to treat each other with respect based on our shared values, not our essentially superficial differences.

Very interesting, don't you think that this movie "Independence Day" is becoming the

most successful movie ever? Some say it's because they blew up the White House and the Congress—[laughter]—and that may be. But, you know, you see story after story after story about how the movie audiences leap up and cheer at the end of the movie when we vanquish the alien invaders, right? I mean, what happened? The country was flat on its back, the rest of the world was threatened, and you see all over the world all these people have all of a sudden put aside the differences that seem so trivial once their existence was threatened, and they're working together all over the world to defeat a common adversary.

Why can't we work together to achieve common dreams? What is it about people that they need to adopt creeds that will enable them to demean other people and look on them as subhuman and take their lives away? We have to fight that. You're living in a time where, literally, you're going to be able to do things that have not been invented yet. A lot of you will be in jobs within a decade that have not been invented yet. The patterns of work and life, of travel and learning will be unbelievable. And no nation is as well-positioned as the United States if we seize our opportunities, meet our challenges, and protect our values.

You have to ask yourself—and I hope you'll take the time before you leave here, before you leave the White House, before you leave the Capital City—the whole history of our country is here—and say, what kind of country do I want to live in? What do I want America to look like when my children are my age? And what should I do to help America look like that? A simple question. Those are the questions I asked myself before I ran for President, because I knew that it's a rather rigorous enterprise and you have to have a high pain threshold today to do this sort of thing. [Laughter]

And to me, there are three simple answers. When my daughter is my age and I have grandchildren, I want America to be a place where the American dream is alive for every person who's willing to work for it, no matter where they start out in life. I want America to be a place that is coming together, not being split apart; that really appreciates all the differences that are in this country and

binds us together by the things that have held us together all this time. Just go back and read the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. And I want this country to continue to be the world's strongest force for peace and freedom and prosperity, because we are doing something in this country that needs to be done in the rest of the world. People have to be able to bridge their differences and find a way to work together.

Now, that's what I want—fairly simple things; three things. And I work for it up here every day with a simple strategy: I think we have to create more opportunity for everybody, demand more responsibility from everybody, and do everything we can to build a community and make America stronger, and our families, our towns, and our national community as well.

There are some very specific things that we've tried to do. Four years ago, our economic house was out of order. We quadrupled our debt in 4 years. We had a \$290 billion deficit. We had the slowest job growth rate since the Great Depression so we had to do some basic things just to put the house back in order.

And we had a very simple strategy: Drive down the deficit to reduce the burden of debt on future generations; lower interest rates and get investment back to put people to work; expand the trade in American products and services around the world because that creates more high-wage jobs here at home; and invest in education, technology, research, and the preservation of the environment.

Four years later, it's obvious to me that that strategy is working. Our deficit is less than half of what it was. It was \$290 billion; it's going to be \$117 billion this year. This is the first time in every year of a President's term that the deficit has been reduced since the 1840's. But we had to do it because we have never had a time in history when we built up so much debt so quickly. And the American people have responded. Our economy's created over 10 million jobs. So we're moving in the right direction. But that had to be done. It is not enough, but it's an important first step.

In terms of our leadership for peace and freedom, in many parts of the world we're better off today than we were 4 years ago, and there are no nuclear weapons pointed at any one of the United States for the first time since nuclear weapons were developed. So we're moving in the right direction. We're finally beginning to build compacts and partnerships all around the world to combat terrorism and the other problems that I mentioned.

We've worked hard to give you cleaner air and cleaner water and to preserve the natural resources of the land. I think one of the essential ideas that has to dominate the thinking of both parties and all Americans as we move into the 21st century is that you can develop the economy without destroying the environment. In fact, you can enhance the development of the economy with the right sort of environmental strategy. And if we continue to believe that the only way we can grow our economy is by destroying our environment, some day there won't be any economy to develop. And we have got to do that now. We have to make that commitment now.

You know, it's amazing how many science fiction books and movies are all predicated on the fact that one day we won't have any environment left in America, we won't have any trees left, the air won't be fit to breathe. I'm amazed—we've now got with this new sci-fi channel on one of our cables here—it's amazing the percentage of movies that come on that thing that are predicated on the fact that we are determined to destroy our environment. We must not do it.

I also believe that we must not continue to tolerate the levels of crime and violence we have in our country. We have a crime rate coming down 4 years in a row now. We've got 100,000 police we're putting on the street in community policing. We've finally done something about putting guns into the hands of young people; we have a zero tolerance strategy for guns in schools. We've abolished a few assault weapons, 19 kinds, and passed the Brady bill. And I want to point out that a lot of people said some bad things when we did it. There's not a single hunter that's lost a rifle since we abolished the assault weapons and passed the Brady

bill. But there are 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers who could not get handguns because they were checked and their criminal record was found out and they did not get the guns. And America is safer as a result of that.

So we have to continue to work on the crime problem. And I want to make a personal plea to you. Citizens have a role to play in this. Yesterday the Vice President and I had representatives from citizens patrol groups all over America here at the White House, and we announced that the cellular telephone association is going to give 50,000 phones to these citizens patrol groups, so that when people are out here walking the streets and they find something wrong, they can immediately call the police department or the hospital, to the emergency room, or the fire department.

But in spite of all of our progress, the crime rate among people under 18 and the violence rate among people under 18 is still going up in most communities in America. That's because there are too many young people out there on the street that are raising themselves, that are joining gangs doing bad things because they're not in good gangs doing good things. We all want to be part of something. I mean, look, you've got the same shirt on; you're in a good gang today. *[Laughter]* It's an important thing to know. And you can do that. You can have more influence on a lot of young people than I can. So I urge you to deal with that issue.

And finally, and most importantly, if we want to see everybody do well in the 21st century, we've got to give everybody the tools to do well. And more important, more than ever before, that means education. We've worked hard to improve educational opportunities here, but we have more to do. And I want to encourage all of you to do what you can to support increasing access to high-quality education, from our initiatives to hook up all the classrooms to the Internet, to help the school districts that are hardest pressed in the country get some money to do rebuilding and repairs, to opening the doors of college education to everyone.

I hope that Congress will agree with me to give a tax deduction for the cost of tuition for college. I hope the Congress will agree

with me to give a tax credit that will enable everybody to at least get a community college diploma, because we need to make at least 2 years after high school as universal for education as high school is today.

If you look at the economy, if you look at the census figures, if you look at the people that are doing well and the people that aren't, it is absolutely clear that in the information age the gains to education are far more profound than at any time in our history. And we have simply got to do more to make it universal if we want America to grow together instead of drift apart. We can do it. You can do it if you demand that it be done.

Finally, let me say that I believe we've got to do something more than we have done—many things more—to help strengthen the American family. And we have to recognize that families are in a different position than they used to be. I heard—someone made a funny joke last night, making fun of, to some extent, the Congress, to some extent, me—saying, you listen to people talk in Washington and they say the problem with people on welfare is that they want to stay home with their kids instead of going to work. And then they give a speech and say the problem with middle-class families is the mothers want to go to work instead of staying home with their kids. You know, and it's funny—you think about it. *[Laughter]*

What's the real issue? What's the real issue? The real issue is most people who are parents work; most people who are parents who work have to work. So what should our goal be? Our goal should be to help Americans succeed at home and at work.

I look at all of you—and if you want to make a contribution to our future, I want you to be able to make it. But I also think the most important contribution you can ever make is to have children and raise them right and make them good and strong and good citizens and good people, like you are. So what we should be doing is to think about instead of making it an either-or we ought to ask ourselves over and over and over again, what can we do to help people succeed at home and at work?

There's what the family leave law was all about. That's what my efforts, which have been very controversial, to try to help schools

with experiments that they want to adopt, including curfews, or even in some school districts, school uniform policy, that's what that was all about. You may think it sounds bad but you're all here in one. [Laughter] And we haven't sought to impose them, we just sought to give schools the opportunity to adopt them if they wanted. That's what our controversial efforts to prevent the advertising and distribution and sales illegally of tobacco to teenagers is all about, trying to help parents deal with the implications of being away from their kids a lot, working, but also trying to do a good job raising their children.

It's also a large part of what the Vice President and I have worked on in the area of television. You know, we passed a law, the telecommunications law, which will create hundreds of thousands of jobs, but it also required in new television sets that a V-chip be placed that would give parents more control over the programming their young children watch. And all the entertainment industry agreed to set up a ratings system for television, which we thought was a very, very good thing. And we're working on that, they're working on it.

The television today is very different than it was when I was 10 or 11 years old, or 6 or 7. We have hundreds of studies, literally hundreds of studies showing the staggering number of hours that young people have spent watching people get killed by the time they're 16 or 17, and showing clearly that it makes people more numb to violence, less sensitive to the impact of their behavior on others.

So we've worked hard on that. But I don't think that is enough. And I just want to mention this issue, because I think it's very important. We have been working very hard not only to have a ratings system and a V-chip, which is sort of a negative thing, but also to try to bring more positive educational programming for children to television. This month we're challenging members of the entertainment industry who have done a great job on this rating to come to the White House to talk about improving the quality and quantity of children's programming. So the industry is going its part.

The truth is that what we need now is for the Government to do its part. The Federal

Communications Commission has had before it for a long time now a measure that would require broadcasters to put a minimum of 3 hours a week of quality educational children's programming on. If you think about all the hours the television is on a week, 3 hours a week doesn't seem like too much, at least doesn't seem to me. It's less than 2 percent of the Nation's air time. The initiative is stalled, and some people have opposed it. But the airwaves clearly, under our law, are designed to promote the public interest. I can't imagine anything we could do that would better promote it than to put more quality educational programming for children on television. So I'd like to ask all of you to support that. And I hope very much that the Federal Communications Commission will finally act on it.

Well, these are some of the things that I think we're facing as we move into the 21st century. We've got a responsibility, those of us in my generation, particularly those of us like me that had extraordinary opportunities to be in places like where you are over 30 years ago, to try to create opportunity—to try to create a framework within which everybody will be expected to be responsible and to try to bring this country together as a community.

But most of your lives are still ahead of you. And every one of you, if for not other reason than you're a part of this program, will have a disproportionate opportunity—a disproportionate opportunity to exercise leadership. And therefore you have a disproportionate responsibility to do a good job with it, every one of you.

When you go back home, your friends will look at you a little differently. They'll listen to you a little more closely. They'll want to know what you saw up here. They'll want to know what your opinion is. And I am telling you, you have got to be thinking now in this rapidly changing world, what do you want the country to look like when your kids are your age? What do you want your work years to be like? How do you want to feel about your country? And what do you have to do to get there?

And I leave you with this. It's very fashionable for people today to say, "Well, it doesn't really matter what's going on in Washington.

Nobody can make a difference. Why should I vote; it's all a bunch of bull." I'm telling you, in the 4 years I have been President, I now am more optimistic than I was the day I got here. I believe more strongly than I did the day I got here about the potential of all of us working together to make good things happen.

And this country is a very great country. There are 10 million more people working than there were 4 years ago; 8 million people have refinanced their homes; 3.7 million people have homes who didn't have them; hundreds of thousands of people have better college loans than they did; 45,000 young people are working to rescue their communities in our national service programs and earning money to go to college. Don't let anybody ever tell you that you can't make a difference in a democracy, that you can't change the course of the country, that you can't lift people up or pull people together. That is not true.

And the most important thing maybe you can do in the short run when you go home is tell people this country works. That's why we have been around for 220 years. This country works. This is a great country. And you have to pull your weight and challenge your friends and family members to do the same. But I will say that if you do it, the best days of this country are still ahead.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:33 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor John Doring of Montoursville, PA; Joseph Caouette, chairman, Americanism Commission, and Lawrence Sperry, national commander's representative, American Legion; Peter Johnson, 1963 Boys Nation alumnus; and Peggy Sappenfield, national secretary, American Legion Auxiliary.

Statement on Signing Legislation Authorizing Most-Favored-Nation Trade Status for Bulgaria

July 18, 1996

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 2853, authorizing the termination of the application of Title IV of the Trade Act of 1974 to Bulgaria. It permits the President to ac-

cord permanent most-favored-nation (MFN) status to Bulgaria.

This is an important milestone in U.S.-Bulgarian relations. Bulgaria joins Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia as democratic countries from which the United States has fully removed trade restrictions that originated in concerns about human rights practices during the Cold War period. The legislation signals America's confidence in the political development of Bulgaria and reaffirms America's commitment to Bulgaria as it continues its difficult and historic economic transformation.

Bulgaria's favorable record on immigration, its progress in the protection of human rights and development of a democratic, free-market society, and the establishment of cooperative relations with the United States helped facilitate passage of H.R. 2853.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
July 18, 1996.

NOTE: H.R. 2853, approved July 18, was assigned Public Law No. 104-162.

Executive Order 13012— Establishing an Emergency Board To Investigate a Dispute Between the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority and Their Employees Represented by The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers

July 18, 1996

A dispute exists between the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority and its employees represented by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.

The dispute has not heretofore been adjusted under the provisions of the Railway Labor Act, as amended (45 U.S.C. 151 *et seq.*) (the "Act").

A party empowered by the Act has requested that the President establish an emergency board pursuant to section 9A of the Act (45 U.S.C. 159a).

Section 9A(c) of the Act provides that the President, upon such request, shall appoint